



# Professional Internships from Students' Perspectives: A Quantitative Analysis at a University in Vietnam

Tran Thanh Du<sup>1\*</sup>, Tran Thi Hai Yen<sup>2</sup>, Dang Thi Bao Dung<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Thu Dau Mot University, Viet Nam; [dutt@tdmu.edu.vn](mailto:dutt@tdmu.edu.vn) (T.T.D.).

<sup>3</sup>Tay Do University, Viet Nam.

**Abstract.** In contemporary university education, internships are a compulsory component that students must complete to bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice. The internship program was designed to address the increasing demand for work-ready graduates by providing students with firsthand professional experience while they are still in university, thereby facilitating a smoother transition into their future careers. To align with this objective, Thu Dau Mot University has developed an internship program specifically for English-major students, consisting of three separate courses, each intended to cultivate different aspects of students' professional development. These courses are strategically structured to progressively enhance students' skills, starting from basic workplace familiarity to more advanced professional competencies. Despite the program's structured design, questions have been raised regarding its overall effectiveness in contributing to student development. To address these concerns, the study titled "A Survey on the Effectiveness of Internships for English-Majored Students at Thu Dau Mot University" was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the internship program provided by the university. A questionnaire survey was employed as the primary research instrument to collect data, targeting 150 randomly selected English-major students from the university. The results confirmed the effectiveness of the internship program at Thu Dau Mot University in fostering students' professional experience and development. The findings underscore the efficacy of the three-course internship model in enhancing students' readiness for professional environments and encouraging a proactive approach to skill development. Additionally, the research offers valuable insights for educators and administrators aiming to enhance the design and implementation of internship programs in higher education.

**Keywords:** Educational outcomes, Internship effectiveness, Professional development, Student experience, Thu Dau Mot University, University internship programs.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background to the Study

Internships are mandatory for university students, providing them with opportunities to develop skills in their chosen profession. They bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world application, equipping students with essential skills for future careers. Arcidiacono (2015) highlights the importance of post-graduate internships in facilitating this transition, underscoring their effectiveness in fostering work-readiness and enhancing placement outcomes. The training received during internships enhances students' knowledge and performance, preparing them to succeed in the workforce. Graduates who have completed internships are more likely to excel in their jobs compared to those who have not. The primary goal of internships is to foster development in the skills and behavior of trainees.

Internships provide valuable learning experiences for both students and host organizations. They help students gain practical experience, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and its application. Through internships, students sharpen necessary skills, attitudes, and values associated with effective job performance. Internships also provide an opportunity for fresh candidates to experience the working conditions and demands of the professional environment. This practical exposure is crucial for understanding the connection between theory and practice, thus enhancing students' readiness for their careers (Beard & Morton, 1998; Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000; Parveen & Mirza, 2012).

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, graduates who completed internships, whether paid or unpaid, have a higher likelihood of receiving job offers compared to those without internship experience (Rebecca, 2013). Internships not only provide practical learning opportunities but also offer potential job prospects, as companies gain insight into the intern's abilities and may extend full-time job offers (Aimee, 2016). Moreover, Walker II (2011) demonstrated that internships contribute to higher retention rates and degree completion, emphasizing their role in maintaining academic momentum and fostering long-term educational success. Internships support professional socialization, stimulate the development of teaching-learning concepts, and enhance motivation for continuous learning and reflection.

Given these benefits, internships are essential for teacher education and the overall development of students. The researchers recognized the need to evaluate the impact of internship programs on trainee teachers, particularly in the context of Thu Dau Mot University. As outlined in the Faculty of Foreign Language's detailed course syllabus (2020), the university's internship modules play a vital role in shaping students' professional development and bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world experience. Such programs play a crucial role in bridging the gap between academic preparation and real-world teaching demands, fostering the development of essential skills and competencies (Jogan & Sushma, 2019; Parveen & Mirza, 2012).

Internships help students gain real-world experience, apply theoretical knowledge, and accumulate the skills needed for future success (Basow & Byrne, 1993). They also encourage students to practice soft skills, which are crucial for adapting to the professional environment. This study focuses on the experiences of English majors at Thu Dau Mot University after their internships, examining the effectiveness of the university's internship modules.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact of internship programs on English-majored students at the university. To fulfill this purpose, the following question was put forward: *How effective are internships for English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University?*

The current study aims to highlight the effectiveness of internships for English majors at Thu Dau Mot University. It seeks to clarify the necessity of the university's three-course internship model. Understanding the effectiveness of each course helps students better focus their efforts and achieve the objectives of each internship phase. By examining the effectiveness of these internships, the study provides evidence supporting the structure of the three-course model and helps students plan to meet the requirements of each course.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical Background

#### 2.1.1. Definition of Internship

Internships are widely recognized as a crucial component of higher education, facilitating the transition from academic learning to practical application in professional settings. According to Patton and Dial (1988), an internship is defined as "a form of experiential learning where individuals gain supervised, hands-on experience and practical knowledge relevant to a specific field." This definition emphasizes the dual nature of internships as both educational and experiential, highlighting the importance of supervision in ensuring the quality of the learning experience. DiLorenzo-Aiss and Mathisen (1996) further elaborate that internships involve a structured process, including a specified number of work hours, the possibility of either paid or unpaid positions, academic credit, and oversight by academic and corporate representatives.

In the Vietnamese higher education context, Lam and Ching (2007) describe internships as a vital link between academic learning and real-world experience. Vietnamese universities often incorporate internships into their curricula to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This integration is reflected in the allocation of specific credit hours designated for internship programs, which is a common practice across various disciplines. For instance, in the field of business education, internships are often integrated as a mandatory component of the degree program, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in real-world business environments (Michael, 2002).

#### 2.1.2. Functions of Internship

Internships serve multiple functions, primarily providing students with a platform to explore the practical application of their academic knowledge. Adnan Jawabri (2017) argues that internships offer students an opportunity to engage in professional practice, allowing them to gain firsthand experience in their chosen field. Beggs et al. (2008) highlight that internships are crucial for developing practical skills and bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world job applications. As highlighted by Arcidiacono (2015), internships are pivotal in aligning theoretical learning with real-world professional demands, thereby fostering workforce readiness and enhancing the employability of graduates.

Internships play a significant role in shaping students' professional development (Divine et al., 2007). They offer a unique context for students to enhance their technical skills, problem-solving abilities, and understanding of industry practices. For example, an internship in a marketing firm might allow students to apply their knowledge of consumer behavior and marketing strategies to real-world projects, thus deepening their understanding and reinforcing their learning (Miller & Vick, 2010). Furthermore, internships provide students with opportunities to network with professionals, gain insights into workplace dynamics, and explore potential career paths, all of which are essential for career development (Harris & Rainer, 2010).

#### 2.1.3. Internship effectiveness

The effectiveness of an internship program is evaluated based on various constructs, including the development of career skills, career focus, and practical outcomes such as employment opportunities and early career success (Beard & Morton, 1998; Gault, Redington & Schlage, 2000; Taylor, 1988). For this study, two major aspects of internship effectiveness are emphasized: career skills and career focus.

**Career skills:** Career skills are categorized into several areas: academic skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, and job acquisition skills. Academic skills include analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for understanding and addressing complex issues in a professional context. Communication skills involve both oral and written communication, essential for effective interaction with colleagues and clients (Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990). Interpersonal skills encompass teamwork, leadership, and the ability to work collaboratively, which are critical for success in most professional environments (Karakaya & Karakaya, 1996). Job acquisition skills, such as resume writing and job interviewing, are also vital as they help students transition from academia to the workforce (Floyd & Gordon, 1998). Developing these skills through internships is essential for students preparing to enter the workforce. Internships provide a practical context for students to acquire and hone these competencies, which are highly valued by employers (Taylor, 1992). For instance, internships often involve real-world tasks that require students to apply their theoretical knowledge, thereby enhancing their skills and increasing their employability.

**Career focus:** Career focus pertains to the alignment of personal values, vocational abilities, and career aspirations with professional goals. Internships help students gain clarity about their career paths by providing them with practical experience in their field of interest. This experience allows students to assess their career

interests and goals, leading to more informed career decisions and increased motivation (Madoch, 1980). Internships also contribute to students' self-efficacy and job satisfaction, which are important factors in career development (Taylor, 1992).

Internships enable students to explore various career options and gain insights into different professional roles (Eyler, 1992). By participating in internships, students can better understand their career preferences and make more informed decisions about their future careers. This alignment of personal and professional goals is crucial for long-term career satisfaction and success (Madoch, 1980).

#### 2.1.4. Factors Affecting Internship Effectiveness

Several factors contribute to the success of an internship program, encompassing both individual and organizational elements. Coco (2000) identifies eight predictors of internship effectiveness: three individual factors (academic preparedness, positive attitude, self-initiative) and five organizational factors (challenging job, autonomy, effective supervision, task role clarity, compensation).

**Academic preparedness:** Academic preparedness is a critical factor in determining the success of an internship. Students who are academically prepared are more likely to succeed in their internships because they have a solid grasp of key concepts and the ability to apply them in a professional context (Basow & Byrne, 1993; Beard, 1997). Academic preparedness involves having the necessary theoretical knowledge and problem-solving skills to tackle real-world challenges effectively.

**Positive attitude:** A positive attitude toward the internship experience is crucial for its success. Students who view internships as valuable learning opportunities and approach them with enthusiasm are more likely to have a rewarding experience (Beard, 1997; Feldman & Weitz, 1990). A positive outlook enhances students' engagement, motivation, and overall satisfaction with their internship experience, which contributes to the effectiveness of the program.

**Self-initiative:** Self-initiative is an important factor in determining internship effectiveness. Interns who take the initiative to actively engage in their work, seek feedback, and ask questions are more likely to benefit from their internships (Beard & Morton, 1998; Patton & Dial, 1988). Self-initiative demonstrates a proactive approach to learning and professional development, which can lead to greater success in internship settings. Moreover, Berger (1991) emphasized that internships are most effective when both students and employers actively work to align expectations, manage tasks efficiently, and maintain open communication throughout the experience.

**Challenging job:** Assigning interns challenging and meaningful tasks is essential for the effectiveness of the internship. Interns engaged in substantive projects and real-world challenges are more likely to feel satisfied and gain valuable experience. (Hackman & Oldman, 1980; Rothman, 2007). Challenging work helps interns develop new skills and apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, which enhances their overall learning experience.

**Effectiveness of supervision:** The quality of supervision plays a crucial role in determining the success of an internship. Effective supervisors provide guidance, feedback, and support, which are essential for the intern's professional growth (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989; Taylor, 1988). High-quality supervision ensures that interns are equipped with the necessary resources and support to achieve their objectives, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the internship program. Wesley and Buckle (2005) emphasize the importance of integrating mentorship and well-designed curricula with internship opportunities, particularly in preparing undergraduates for specific industries, such as retail. Their findings suggest that the combination of mentorship and a carefully designed curriculum significantly enhances the efficacy of internships in promoting career readiness.

**Task clarity:** Clearly defined tasks are a critical factor in the effectiveness of an internship program. Interns who have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities are more likely to perform well and feel satisfied with their experience (Rothman, 2007; Sawyer, 1992). Task clarity enables interns to establish realistic goals and manage their responsibilities effectively, which enhances their learning experience and overall performance.

**Compensation:** Compensation, whether monetary or in the form of academic credit, is an important factor in maintaining intern motivation and engagement. Paid internships are often perceived as more valuable and realistic by students (Hamilton, 1992; Madoch, 1980). Adequate compensation can influence students' perceptions of the internship's value and impact, which contributes to their overall satisfaction and effectiveness.

#### 2.1.5. Outcomes of Internship Effectiveness

The effectiveness of an internship has significant implications for students, educational institutions, and employers. For students, successful internships often lead to better career prospects, higher salaries, and early job offers (Gault et al., 2000). Internships help students develop essential soft skills, such as communication, management, and self-discipline, which are highly valued by employers (Wesley & Bickle, 2005).

In terms of academic performance, the impact of internships is mixed. Some studies report no significant improvement in grades post-internship (Knechel & Snowball, 1987; Koehler, 1974), while others suggest a slight increase in GPA for students who completed internships (Kwong & Lui, 1991). Watanabe (2005) examined the effects of student employment on academic achievement and found that while part-time work can have a positive impact on time management skills, excessive work commitments may detract from academic focus, a consideration relevant to the balance students must maintain during internships. Internships are also linked to higher rates of degree completion, with students who participate in internships more likely to complete their degree programs (Schock, 2017; Walker II, 2011).

Additionally, internships provide students with opportunities to build professional networks and gain insights into industry trends. These networks can be instrumental in securing future job opportunities and advancing career goals (Harris & Rainer, 2010). The networking opportunities afforded by internships often result in stronger professional connections and greater career advancement prospects.

## 2.2. Previous Studies

### 2.2.1. Foreign Studies

A substantial body of international research has investigated the impact of internships on students' career development and skill acquisition. Gault, Redington, and Schlage (2000) conducted a comprehensive study on the outcomes of internships for undergraduate students. The study highlighted several key benefits, including better job prospects, enhanced professional skills, and increased self-confidence. The study demonstrated that students who completed internships were more likely to secure employment after graduation and reported higher levels of job satisfaction. D'abate, Youndt, and Wenzel (2009) examined the role of internships in developing career competencies and enhancing employability. Their research found that internships played a significant role in helping students acquire both technical and soft skills essential for career success. The study emphasized the critical role of internship quality and effective supervision in maximizing benefits for students. This research underscored the value of internships in preparing students for the workforce and highlighted the need for continuous improvement in internship programs. Similarly, Arcidiacono (2015) explored the effectiveness of post-graduate internships and placement services, highlighting their role in bridging the gap between training and employment opportunities. This aligns with the broader understanding of internships as crucial stepping stones in the transition from education to career.

Several studies have focused on specific populations, such as international students or those pursuing degrees in particular fields. Chao, Walz, and Gardner (1992) investigated the impact of internships on international students' cultural adjustment and career readiness. Their study found that internships helped international students adapt to host cultures and improve career prospects through relevant work experience and cultural exposure (Coco, 2000; Eyler, 1992). This research highlighted the role of internships in facilitating cultural integration and enhancing the employability of international students.

Forret and Dougherty (2004) explored the relationship between internships and career outcomes for business students. Their research indicated a positive association between internships and career success, including higher salaries and job satisfaction. The study also highlighted the importance of internship experiences in shaping students' career aspirations and professional identity. This research provided valuable insights into how internships influence career trajectories and long-term career outcomes for business students.

### 2.2.2. Local Studies

In recent years, professional internships have become an integral component of higher education in Vietnam, offering students valuable opportunities to bridge the gap between academic learning and the professional workforce. Several local studies have examined the experiences and perceptions of Vietnamese students regarding internships, shedding light on the benefits, challenges, and areas for improvement in such programs. Tran and Trang (2020) conducted a study on the benefits and challenges of graduation internships as perceived by English language students at a university in Vietnam. The study revealed that students appreciated the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, noting improvements in their communication and problem-solving skills. However, the research also identified several challenges, including the mismatch between students' academic training and the nature of internship tasks, as well as the lack of guidance and mentorship during the internship period. These issues hindered students from fully maximizing their internship experiences. The authors recommended strengthening collaboration between universities and industry partners to ensure that internships are more relevant to students' academic programs and career goals.

Similarly, Tran (2023) explored the satisfaction levels of English-major students with their internship experiences at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance. This research found that while students were generally satisfied with the internships' contribution to their skill development, they faced difficulties in securing internships that closely matched their academic backgrounds. Additionally, the study indicated that limited exposure to complex tasks and inadequate supervision during internships hindered students' ability to gain comprehensive professional experience. The study emphasized the need for universities to improve their internship programs by offering more structured support and stronger industry connections.

Le (2024) conducted a study titled "*Vietnamese English Majors and Their Internship Experiences: Benefits, Challenges, and Insights*," which explored the internship experiences of English majors in Vietnam. The study identified several key benefits of internships, such as skill enhancement, professional exposure, networking opportunities, and the application of practical knowledge. These benefits contribute to students' career readiness and personal growth. However, the study also revealed significant challenges faced by students during their internships, including difficulties in securing internship placements, pressure to meet performance expectations, monotonous tasks, and steep learning curves. These challenges suggest the need for better support systems and clearer expectations from both universities and internship providers to help students navigate their internship experiences effectively.

In the research study "*Một số giải pháp nâng cao kỹ năng thực hành nghề nghiệp cho sinh viên Khoa Ngoại ngữ*,

*Trường Đại học Thủ Dầu Một,"* Tran (2020) pointed out that with a clear educational goal, the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Thu Dau Mot University has shifted its educational mindset from placing the teacher at the center to "putting the learner at the center"; it has implemented appropriate teaching and learning methods to achieve the required outcomes, promote skill development, and enhance lifelong learning abilities for students. Effective student-centered activities have contributed to shaping students' views on comprehensive development and progress in the era of globalization, increasing their abilities and employment opportunities in various fields. With these positive contributions, student-centered activities need to continue being researched, applied, and developed to foster creativity, self-learning awareness, and enhance students' lifelong learning abilities. The study highlighted the importance of integrating practical skill training into academic curricula and fostering partnerships with businesses to improve the quality and relevance of internships. The author proposed strategies such as increasing the involvement of industry professionals in mentorship roles and offering workshops to better prepare students for their internships.

### 2.2.3. Identifying Research Gaps

Despite the valuable insights provided by existing research, several gaps remain in the literature. One notable gap is the limited research on the specific impact of internships on English-majored students in Vietnam. While general studies on internships provide useful information, there is a need for more focused research on how internships affect English language skills, cultural competence, and career outcomes for this particular student population. Further research in this area would help address the unique needs and challenges faced by English-majored students and provide more targeted recommendations for improving internship programs.

Another gap in the literature is the lack of longitudinal studies that track the long-term effects of internships on students' career development and job satisfaction. Most existing research focuses on short-term outcomes, such as immediate employment rates and skill acquisition. Longitudinal studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how internships influence students' career trajectories over time and offer insights into the long-term benefits of internships.

Additionally, there is a need for research that examines the effectiveness of different types of internships, such as paid versus unpaid internships, and their impact on students' experiences and outcomes. Understanding the benefits of various internship formats can inform best practices for designing and implementing programs. Research in this area could provide valuable insights into how different internship structures affect students' learning experiences and career outcomes.

By addressing these gaps, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on internship effectiveness and provide valuable insights for improving internship programs for English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University. The findings will provide a nuanced understanding of internships' impacts on students' career development and guide the design of more effective programs.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Research Design and Methods

To explore the effectiveness of internship programs for English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University, a quantitative research design was adopted. This approach facilitates the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns and relationships related to internship experiences and outcomes.

The study utilized a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of seven questions designed to gather detailed responses about participants' internship experiences and the perceived impact of these experiences on their career skills development. It was divided into two sections: the first focused on participants' internship situations, while the second explored their perceptions of how the internships influenced their career skills and professional growth.

Quantitative methods were chosen due to their ability to handle large sample sizes and provide generalizable results. Using a structured questionnaire enables efficient data collection from a broad population, which can then be analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of internship programs in meeting educational and career development objectives.

The survey was conducted online using Google Forms, allowing for easy distribution and completion by participants. This method facilitated efficient data collection and organization, enabling responses to be integrated into a single dataset for analysis. Online surveys also offered the advantage of reaching more participants compared to traditional paper-based surveys.

### 3.2. Research Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to capture detailed information about students' internship experiences and their perceived impact on career development. The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions and Likert-scale items, allowing respondents to rate their agreement with various statements on a five-point scale.

The questionnaire was developed to ensure clarity and alignment with the research objectives. The first section addressed participants' internship experiences, including aspects such as the nature of the internship, duration, and tasks performed. The second section focused on participants' opinions regarding the effectiveness of the internship in developing career skills such as communication, problem-solving, and professional

competencies.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, it was pre-tested with a small group of students who had recently completed internships. Feedback from the pre-test was used to refine the questions, improving the instrument's clarity and relevance.

### 3.3. Research Setting

*The research was conducted at Thu Dau Mot University, located in Binh Duong Province, Vietnam, from December 2022 to March 2023. Thu Dau Mot University is a public institution offering a variety of academic programs, including English language and literature. The university's internship program for English-majored students consists of three distinct courses, each designed to address specific career development objectives. The university provides a comprehensive setting for evaluating the effectiveness of various internship courses, making it critical to this research. Its structured internship program enables a detailed assessment of how different aspects of the internship experience contribute to students' career readiness and skill development.*

### 3.4. Research Population

The research population comprised English-majored students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Thu Dau Mot University. The selection of this population was based on their direct involvement in the internship program and their relevance to the study's objectives.

Participants were selected randomly to ensure a representative sample of the student population. This random sampling approach minimized bias and ensured that the findings would accurately reflect the experiences and perceptions of the broader student body.

### 3.5. Research Sample

A total of 150 participants were chosen for this study. The sample size was determined based on statistical considerations to ensure that the results would be representative of the larger population of English-majored students. The selection process involved random sampling from the eligible student population, ensuring that the sample was diverse and reflective of various internship experiences.

Participants were invited to complete the online questionnaire voluntarily. The sample size was chosen to balance the need for statistical validity with practical constraints such as time and resources. The final sample aimed to provide a robust dataset for analyzing the effectiveness of the internship program.

## 3.6. Data Collection and Analysis

### 3.6.1. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through an online survey using Google Forms. The survey was distributed via the university's online platform and was available for a two-week period. Participants were required to complete the questionnaire in one sitting to ensure the consistency and reliability of their responses.

The online format of the survey facilitated easy access for participants and allowed for the efficient collection and management of data. To protect the confidentiality and integrity of the data, the survey was password-protected, and responses were collected anonymously.

### 3.6.2. Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and subjected to various analytical procedures to address the research questions. The analysis included descriptive, factor, and inferential statistical techniques:

**Descriptive Analysis:** Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents and their internship experiences. This included frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations to provide an overview of the data.

**Factor Analysis:** Factor analysis was employed to identify underlying factors and dimensions related to internship experiences and outcomes. This technique grouped related variables and clarified the key components of students' perceptions of internship effectiveness.

**Inferential Analysis:** Inferential statistics were used to test hypotheses and determine the significance of relationships between variables. This analysis evaluated the impact of internships on career skills development and identified factors contributing to the effectiveness of the internship program.

The combination of these analytical techniques provided a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of internship programs and the factors influencing students' career development.

### 3.6.3. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring they were aware of the study's purpose and their rights. Participation was voluntary, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses and securely storing data. The research adhered to ethical standards to protect participants' privacy and ensure the integrity of the findings. The study was conducted with respect for participants' autonomy and a commitment to ethical research practices.

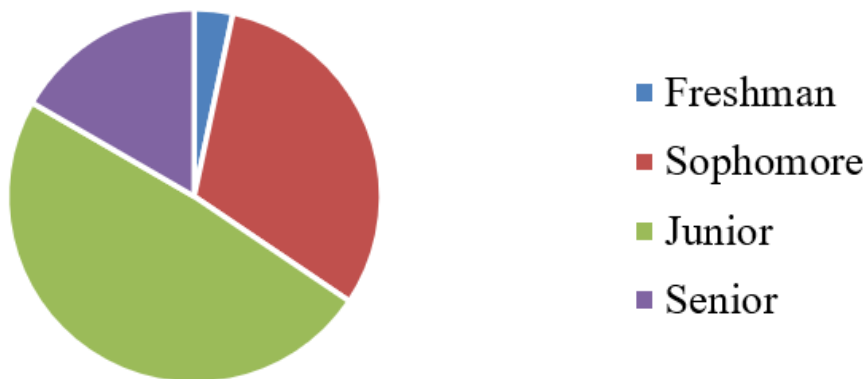
## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Results

The final results of the research are presented in this section, analyzing the data collected from all participants as detailed in Chapter 3. The findings are divided into two main sections: the students' internship background and the perceived effectiveness of the internship program based on survey responses. These divisions allow for a comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences and their evaluation of the program's impact on their professional development.

After distributing the questionnaire and gathering responses, the survey yielded a substantial amount of valuable data. The results were categorized into two parts. The first section focuses on the students' internship background, including demographic details and enrollment patterns. The second section explores the students' opinions on the skills and knowledge they gained during the internship. This structured approach ensures that the data are systematically analyzed to draw meaningful conclusions.

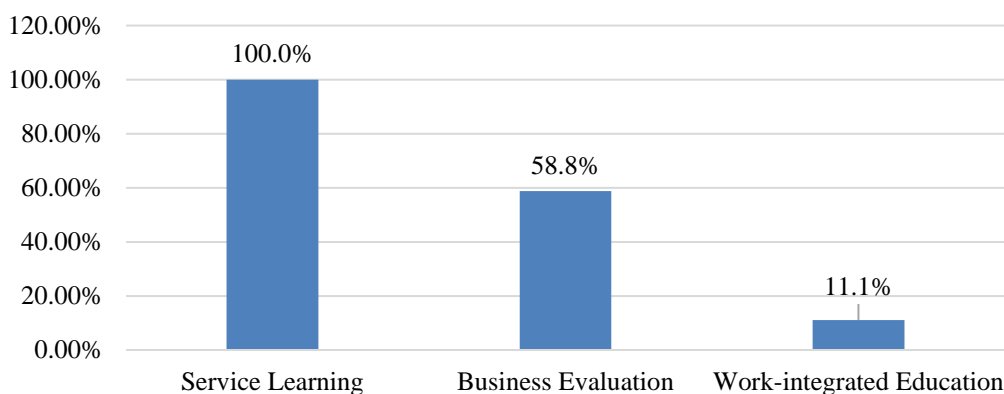
#### 4.1.1. Students' Internship Background



**Figure 1:** Which course year are you in?

The descriptive statistics for the respondent population were coded and summarized using the frequency distribution and cross-tabulation analysis. With respect to the course year of the participants of the questionnaire survey, a higher proportion of the response was composed of third-year students or junior students (52%) as shown in Figure 1. The percentage of sophomore students followed by senior students was 31% and 17%, respectively. Within the result of the survey, the researchers were able to find a small number of freshman-year students (3%) who have enrolled in any internship course. This came from the fact that in the pre-schedule education program of students, it is not until their second year of study that they have their first internship course. The few freshman respondents who had enrolled in the Business Evaluation course may have done so to expedite their graduation timeline. Confident in their skills and knowledge, these students opted to participate earlier than their peers.

The data also suggest that the structured internship timeline plays a critical role in shaping students' professional journeys. Junior students' dominance in the data reflects the alignment of their academic and professional milestones, while the substantial representation of sophomores underscores the growing trend of seeking early internships to gain a competitive edge. For seniors, internships serve as a crucial final step before entering the workforce, allowing them to refine their skills and focus on specific career goals.



**Figure 2:** Which internship course you have enrolled in?.

With respect to the number of students enrolled in each internship course, a higher proportion of students enrolled in the Service Learning course, as 100% of the students in the survey have enrolled in the course. The

following courses gradually decreased in percentage, with students enrolled in Work-integrated Education forming only 11.1% of the total responses, as shown in Figure 2. This result is understandable as the number of senior students participating in the survey is relatively small compared to sophomore or junior, and because the term in which students are scheduled to enroll in internship courses was not in the same period as the survey, the number of senior students enrolled in the course was low. With the Business Evaluation course, the total of students enrolled in the course ranges from sophomore to senior students. As for sophomore students, some of them want to study faster to graduate sooner, so they enrolled in the Business Evaluation course much sooner than their pre-schedule education program. This may suggest that there were sophomore students who had good skills and were confident enough to enroll in the course before their expected schedule.

The enrollment trends depicted in Figure 2 provide a comprehensive overview of student participation in the university's internship programs. While Service Learning remains a universally popular choice, Business Evaluation attracts a significant number of students from diverse academic backgrounds. Work-integrated Education, though limited in participation, plays a vital role in preparing senior students for professional success. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring internship programs to meet the varying needs and aspirations of students, ensuring that they are well-equipped for their future careers.

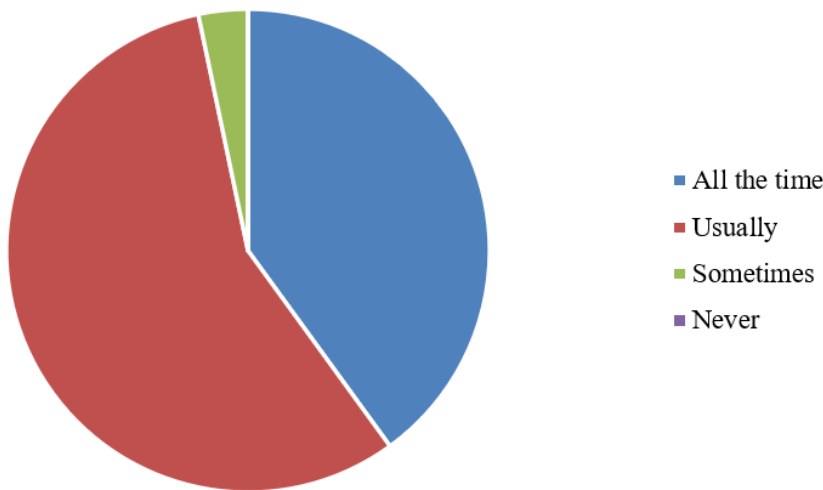


Figure 3: How often did your internship require you to use English?

Figure 3 shows that the majority of students apply for an internship that requires the usage of English in high frequency. Out of the 90 answers to the survey, 56.7% of students usually have to use English to communicate and do their work. This suggests that the internship gave them the opportunity to practice their English skills and apply them to day-to-day conversation, helping them use English more naturally. While they have to use English as a main language, they also need Vietnamese for communication between them and non-English users during their internship. It is essentially not a bad thing; as it will help them well communicate in two different languages. The second-largest proportion of survey responses (40%) came from students who indicated that their internships required them to use English almost exclusively. This group likely consisted of students with strong English proficiency and prior experience, enabling them to thrive in environments where English was the dominant or sole language of communication. A small percentage (3.3%) of students reported less frequent use of English during their internships. This group likely undertook roles that required minimal reliance on English, perhaps due to the nature of the organization or the role itself. Despite the lower frequency of English usage, these students still managed to achieve their desired goals, gaining valuable skills and experiences from their internships.

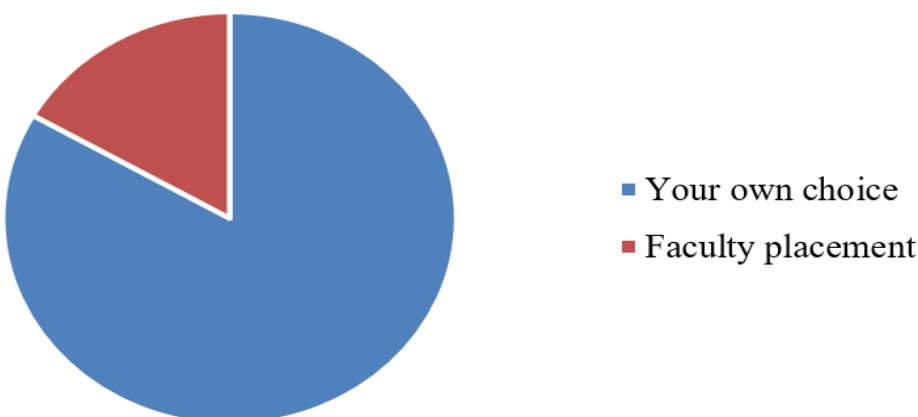


Figure 4: Your internship placement is chosen by whom?



The data in Figure 4 indicate that a large number of students (83.3%) who have enrolled in an internship course had their internship applied by their own choice. This result is the same as the researchers' expectation about the choice of place to apply for students' internships. Most students want to intern in a place they have already worked at for a period or they want to apply for an internship at the same place as their friend. With the recommendation from their personal contacts, students can make a decision on where they want to apply for an internship. As shown in Figure 4, the university also plays a role in students' choice of a place to intern by helping them apply for an internship. Some students may encounter some difficulties when finding a place to apply for an internship, it could be because the place they want to apply to wasn't looking for an intern in that time period, or they couldn't find a place that is suitable for them to intern for the rest of the course length. With the reasons stated above, students might come to university for help.

#### 4.1.2. Students' Opinions on Internship Outcome

Thu Dau Mot University has structured its internship program into three distinct courses designed to progressively develop students' skills and provide practical experience, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of each course. The survey provided participants with a list of desired outcomes of each internship course, and they were asked to rate their agreement with each strategy on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The data presented in the table shows the percentage of participants who selected each response option for each outcome of the internship course.

#### 4.1.3. After the Course Service Learning

**Table 1:** Students' opinion on their outcome after the course Service Learning.

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
You have acquired knowledge about the duties you performed			10%	40%	50%
You can link class materials to real-life work.		3.33%	10%	56.67%	30%
You understand the work environment related to your major.		3.33%	10%	50%	36.67%
You have recognized your responsibility to society.			13.34%	43.33%	43.33%
You can work well independently.			10%	53.33%	36.67%
You can collaborate effectively in a team.			16.67%	43.33%	40%

As shown in Table 1, most of the factors were found to have a positive outcome. A large number of students expressed favorable opinions about their achievements after completing the course, with percentages ranging from 30% as the lowest to 56.67% as the highest. This suggests that many students who enrolled in the course successfully achieved its objectives, as the majority either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements presented in the survey.

However, only 3.3% of the students disagreed with the statements "You can link class materials to real-life work" and "You understand the work environment of your major." Regarding the ability to link class materials to actual work, students first need a solid foundation of knowledge to transform theoretical concepts into practical applications. Some students may struggle with this due to gaps in their understanding, which prevent them from effectively utilizing their class materials. This issue can be addressed by allocating additional time to reinforce their foundational knowledge before progressing to more advanced concepts.

In terms of understanding the work environment of their major, a small percentage of students reported that they still lacked a clear understanding of their professional field after completing the course. This may be attributed to the limited duration of the course, as three weeks might not be sufficient for some students to fully grasp the complexities of their future work environment. Extending the course duration or providing supplementary resources could help address this limitation and ensure students gain a more comprehensive understanding of their major's work environment.

#### 4.1.4. After the Course Business Evaluation

**Table 2:** Students' opinion on their outcome after the course Business Evaluation

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
You have acquired the necessary career skills.			15%	35%	50%
You have gained a better understanding of your work.			20%	45%	35%
You can determine your future career path.		5%	15%	35%	45%
You can apply your knowledge in practice.			15%	45%	40%
You have developed your confidence and professionalism.			15%	35%	50%

In Table 2, the percentage numbers indicated that the majority of students who participated in the survey

were positive about their outcome after the course. For example, 50% strongly with the statement “You acquire the necessary career skills”, suggested that half of the survey population received good skills from the course. There were only 15-20% of students had a neutral opinion on each statement. Only 5% of the survey population disagreed with the statement “You can determine your future career”. One objective of the Business Evaluation course is that students can decide on their future careers after experiencing work-life first-hand. However, a small number of students couldn’t make a decision on their future careers even after enrolling in the course. This might come from the fact that some students after experiencing the work life of their chosen profession realize the hardships of it and start to rethink their choices for a career, leading to them not yet determined their future career.

#### 4.1.5. After The Course Work-Integrated Education:

**Table 3:** Students’ opinion on their outcome after the course Work-integrated Education.

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
You can apply your knowledge skillfully			28.57%	28.57%	42.86%
You can build good relationships with colleagues.		14.28%	14.29%	28.57%	42.86%
You feel integrated into the work environment.			14.29%	57.14%	28.57%
You understand what real work is like.			14.29%	57.14%	28.57%

Table 3 above clearly illustrates that more than half of the survey’s population had a positive opinion about the outcome of their internship course. A large portion of the survey population thinks they successfully applied their knowledge during their internship (42.86%) and formed good relationships with their colleagues (42.86%). Many students think that they feel integrated with their work environment (57.14%) and understand what real work is (57.14%). Only 14.28% of the survey participants didn’t really have a good relationship with their colleagues. It might have been because some students encountered colleagues who had worked before them and treated them badly, so their relationship couldn’t be as good as some would hope.

#### 4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study focused on evaluating the effectiveness of internship programs for English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University, revealing several key insights into the outcomes and impacts of these programs. The results demonstrate that the internship program is largely effective in achieving its objectives and preparing students for their future careers. This section discusses the results in relation to the research objectives, interprets the significance of these findings, and compares them with previous research.

The data collected from the questionnaires indicate that the internship program at Thu Dau Mot University is largely successful in meeting its objectives. The high percentage of students (83.3%) who selected their own internship placements underscores the program’s flexibility and the students’ autonomy in choosing environments that align with their career aspirations. This freedom likely contributes to the positive perceptions of the program, as students can intern in settings that they deem most suitable for their professional growth. By empowering students to take an active role in shaping their internship experiences, the program fosters a sense of ownership and investment, leading to more meaningful and impactful outcomes.

The results further show that a significant majority of students reported favorable outcomes from their internships. Specifically, a substantial percentage of students agreed or strongly agreed with statements related to skill acquisition and the application of these skills in real-world settings. The reported percentages of students who felt they gained and applied skills successfully—50%, 50%, and 42.86% for each respective internship course—suggest that the internship program effectively fulfills its goals of skill development and practical experience. The high levels of student satisfaction and skill application highlight the program’s effectiveness in preparing students for the demands of their future careers.

These findings are consistent with previous research on the benefits of internships for university students. Parveen and Mirza (2012) found that effective implementation of internship programs positively impacts the attainment of internship objectives and enhances student feedback. Internships have been consistently shown to provide students with invaluable real-world work experience, enabling them to directly apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom to authentic professional contexts. This integration of theory and practice equips students with essential competencies and practical know-how to navigate the demands and challenges of their future careers. For instance, Bender (2020) emphasized that internships bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical application, enabling students to develop essential skills and gain a competitive advantage in the job market. Similarly, Beggs et al. (2006) highlighted that internships often lead to improved job offers, successful job placements, and enhanced long-term career trajectories. Internships have also been recognized as a means of fostering personal and social efficacy, particularly in environments where experiential learning and reflection are integrated into the internship structure. Bernstein (1976) underscores the transformative potential of field education programs, noting their capacity to enhance both personal and professional growth through real-world applications. The positive outcomes observed in this study at Thu Dau Mot University align with these established findings in the literature, underscoring the critical role that high-

quality internship programs play in supporting student success and career development.

Nevertheless, some challenges remain. A small percentage of students reported difficulties in linking classroom learning to their work experiences (3.3%), determining their future career paths (5%), and forming strong relationships with colleagues (14.28%). These challenges indicate areas where the internship program may need further refinement to ensure that all students can achieve the desired outcomes. This aligns with the findings of Watanabe (2005), who noted that while college employment can develop practical skills, it may sometimes impede academic performance due to time constraints and competing priorities. The disconnection between academic learning and real-world application suggests a need to enhance preparatory training and support mechanisms to bridge this gap effectively.

The challenges observed in this study, such as difficulties in linking academic knowledge to practical applications and forming professional relationships, reflect issues identified in previous research. For example, Miller and Roberts (2022) noted similar difficulties in internships across various disciplines, suggesting that these challenges are not unique to Thu Dau Mot University. This comparison indicates that while the internship program is effective, there is room for improvement in addressing these common issues. Addressing these areas will not only enhance the internship experience but also ensure that students are better equipped to transition seamlessly into their professional careers.

The findings suggest that the internship program at Thu Dau Mot University is largely successful but could benefit from enhancements in specific areas. Based on the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

**Enhanced preparatory training:** To help students better link classroom learning with practical applications, consider implementing more comprehensive preparatory training or workshops that bridge theoretical knowledge with real-world experiences.

**Improved support systems:** Increasing support for students in building professional relationships and integrating into workplace environments may help address the challenges reported. This could include mentorship programs or additional guidance from internship coordinators.

**Career counseling:** Providing more robust career counseling services can assist students in clarifying their career paths and making informed decisions about their future careers.

The study confirms that the internship program at Thu Dau Mot University meets the researchers' expectations by providing valuable work experience and preparing students for their future careers. The program successfully develops essential skills and characteristics in English-majored students, contributing positively to their professional readiness. However, addressing the identified challenges will further enhance the program's effectiveness and ensure that all students achieve their desired outcomes. Future research could explore these challenges in greater depth to develop targeted interventions that improve the overall internship experience.

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. The successful implementation of the three-course internship model highlights its value in preparing students for the workforce. The Service Learning course instills a sense of social responsibility, the Business Evaluation course aids in career decision-making, and the Work-Integrated Education course offers a platform for testing and applying acquired skills. These components collectively contribute to the comprehensive development of students' professional abilities.

From a practical standpoint, the results suggest that the internship program is effective and should be maintained and potentially expanded. The insights gained from this research can help refine the program further by addressing identified challenges, such as enhancing support for relationship-building and better linking academic knowledge with practical application. The effectiveness of the program reinforces its value in educational settings and could potentially serve as a model for other institutions seeking to improve their internship offerings.

Recommendations for future studies include expanding the participant pool to increase the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Conducting research over a longer period would allow for a more detailed analysis and provide additional insights into the program's long-term impact. Moreover, focusing on each internship course individually in future studies could yield deeper insights into their specific contributions and challenges. This approach would help identify targeted improvements and further validate the effectiveness of each course.

Despite careful planning and execution, the study has several limitations. The sample size of 90 students may not fully represent the entire student population, potentially affecting the generalizability of the results. The research was conducted over a 14-week timeframe, which limited the depth of analysis and may have overlooked certain aspects of the internship courses. Additionally, combining all three courses into a single study may have diluted the focus on the effectiveness of individual courses.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the internship program for English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University. The research involved a thorough analysis of data collected from students who participated in three distinct internship courses: Service Learning, Business Evaluation, and Work-Integrated Education. The results revealed that each course contributed uniquely to the development of students' work-related skills and personal characteristics. The Service Learning course provided students with their initial exposure to an English-speaking environment, fostering adaptability and a sense of responsibility through charity work. This course enabled students to develop skills for both independent and collaborative work, effectively preparing them for future professional settings. The Business Evaluation course allowed students to observe and assess potential

career paths, offering valuable insights into their future professional environments. The majority of students reported that this course helped them make informed decisions about their careers, though some faced challenges in aligning their observations with their career goals. Lastly, the Work-Integrated Education course enabled students to apply their skills in real-world settings. Most students expressed satisfaction with their experiences, despite encountering some difficulties in forming professional relationships and adapting to workplace dynamics. Overall, the study supports the hypothesis that the structured internship program significantly benefits English-majored students by enhancing their work readiness, professional adaptability, and decision-making skills.

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